

New Hampshire Rail Transit Authority

Chair: Peter Burling

Vice Chair: Katherine Hersh

**Minutes: August 28, 2009, 10:00 am
Legislative Office Building Room 201**

Attendance: Kathy Hersh, David Preece, Mike Izbicki, Tim Moore, Malcolm Taylor, Kit Morgan, Stephen Pesci, Bruce Woodruff, Mark Brewer, Representative Bouchard, Representative Allen, Representative Williams

I. Call to Order – 10:10

II. Public Input –

William Remington provided information to the board on speed restrictions on Pan Am's New Hampshire Main Line, a communication with the Surface Transportation Board, and other documents.

III. Minutes – August 14, 2009

A quorum not being present, there was no vote on the previous meeting's minutes.

IV. Update on Grant Process

Mike Izbicki reviewed the grant that was submitted Aug. 21 for Track 3 planning funds. The application was for \$2.8 million for the Concord to Boston corridor, including a 50% match. In response to a question, Mike said the match is primarily from a \$1 million state capital budget appropriation. The appropriation, originally intended for purchase of station sites in Nashua and Manchester, requires a local contribution as well, so the Legislative Fiscal Committee and possibly the legislature will need to approve a change. Kathy Hersh said she had spoken to the mayor of Nashua and to Jay Minkarah about the alternative use of these funds. Mike said the grant, if approved, will fund preliminary engineering, preparation of an environmental document, appraisal of the corridor, aerial mapping, and a service development plan.

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A Track 2 “shovel ready” application is being prepared for submission on Oct 2 for Concord to Boston. This will be for \$300 million, including \$50 to acquire the railroad corridor if necessary. A categorical exclusion (documentation of environmental effects) will be prepared and submitted for the project. A more extensive environmental assessment may be required.

V. Committee updates

Mike Izbicki and David Preece provided a briefing on two meetings held with the Nashua, Manchester, and Concord chambers of commerce and other business interests to try to engage the business community in the project and to create a “champion” to maintain momentum and public awareness. At the most recent meeting on Aug. 26, there was discussion about staff support or a steering committee to provide these functions, but no source of funds was identified. The group will meet again Sept. 2 at 10:00 in Room 203 of the LOB.

At the Aug. 26 meeting, Peter Burling circulated a draft resolution; it was also circulated to board members. The resolution is intended to express legislative support for the NH Capitol Corridor project, and it may be submitted to a special session on Oct. 28. There were several comments and suggestions on the draft as follows: include mention of the contribution that the NH Capitol Corridor project will make to the Boston–Montreal High Speed Rail corridor; mention the environmental benefits of the project and include its contribution to freight rail, which has many of the same environmental and economic benefits; and mention that the rail service would bring passengers to Manchester–Boston Regional Airport from Concord and northern communities as well as from Massachusetts.

Mark Brewer asked if the Business and Industry Association had been involved with the chamber group. David Preece responded that the BIA had not shown an interest in the project to date but that efforts were underway to bring it on board.

Public Relations: No one from the committee was present, but it was noted that the logo contest has been mentioned in several newspapers and on local cable channels.

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Press conference: In response to a question, Kathy Hersh said the press conference had not been held because the Governor was not available and wanted to be involved. Peter Burling will attempt to reschedule in coordination with the Governor's office.

- VI. Other discussion** Tim Moore said the board should consider a “master planning” process to determine long-term statewide objectives, and suggested a letter to regional planning commission directors asking for their regional rail priorities as a first step. David Preece said he could mention this at the RPC directors’ next monthly meeting on Sept. 10. The board agreed to set up a master planning committee, and Tim Moore, Rep. Mary Allen, Steve Pesci and Malcolm Taylor volunteered to serve on it. The committee will prepare a draft letter to regional planning commissions for review at the next board meeting.

Kathy Hersh reminded the members of the public who were present that they could be added to her email list for all meeting notices upon request.

Steve Pesci suggested the board consider inviting rail authorities from neighboring states to an information exchange meeting later in the fall or winter. He also reminded board members of the need to use the full name “NH Capitol Corridor” to avoid conflict with the Capitol Corridor in California.

It was agreed that the board should meet monthly beginning in September, so the next meeting will be September 25 in Room 201, Legislative Office Building.

- VIII** The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kit Morgan